

TESTIMONY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

**OVERSIGHT ON FISCAL YEAR 2002 SPENDING
AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**



Testimony of Daniel Tangherlini
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Anthony A. Williams
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Committee on Public Works and the Environment
Carol Schwartz, Chairperson

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Good day, Chairperson Schwartz, Councilmembers and staff. I am Dan Tangherlini, Director of the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) and I am pleased to present the testimony for DDOT for this oversight hearing on our operation for this fiscal year and last. As I will describe below we have made major progress in the District's transportation system, including better road and bridge maintenance and road reconstruction, better traffic management and safety, better neighborhood-based planning, better response to emergencies and weather events, including the recent Presidents' Day storm, and better training, facilities and equipment for our staff.

Introduction

DDOT is responsible for 1,100 miles of roads; over 200 bridges; the District's tree canopy; overseeing our mass transit operations; bicycle and pedestrian activities; traffic and transportation safety; and regulation of the public right of way. DDOT works to improve, upgrade, and maintain the District's transportation infrastructure to facilitate the movement of people and goods within the city as well as into and out of the District. DDOT ensures that our transportation system continues to meet our needs and that replacement costs and disruptions are minimized.

Major Infrastructure Projects

DDOT is proud to report that we have completed several major projects and are close to finishing a number of others.

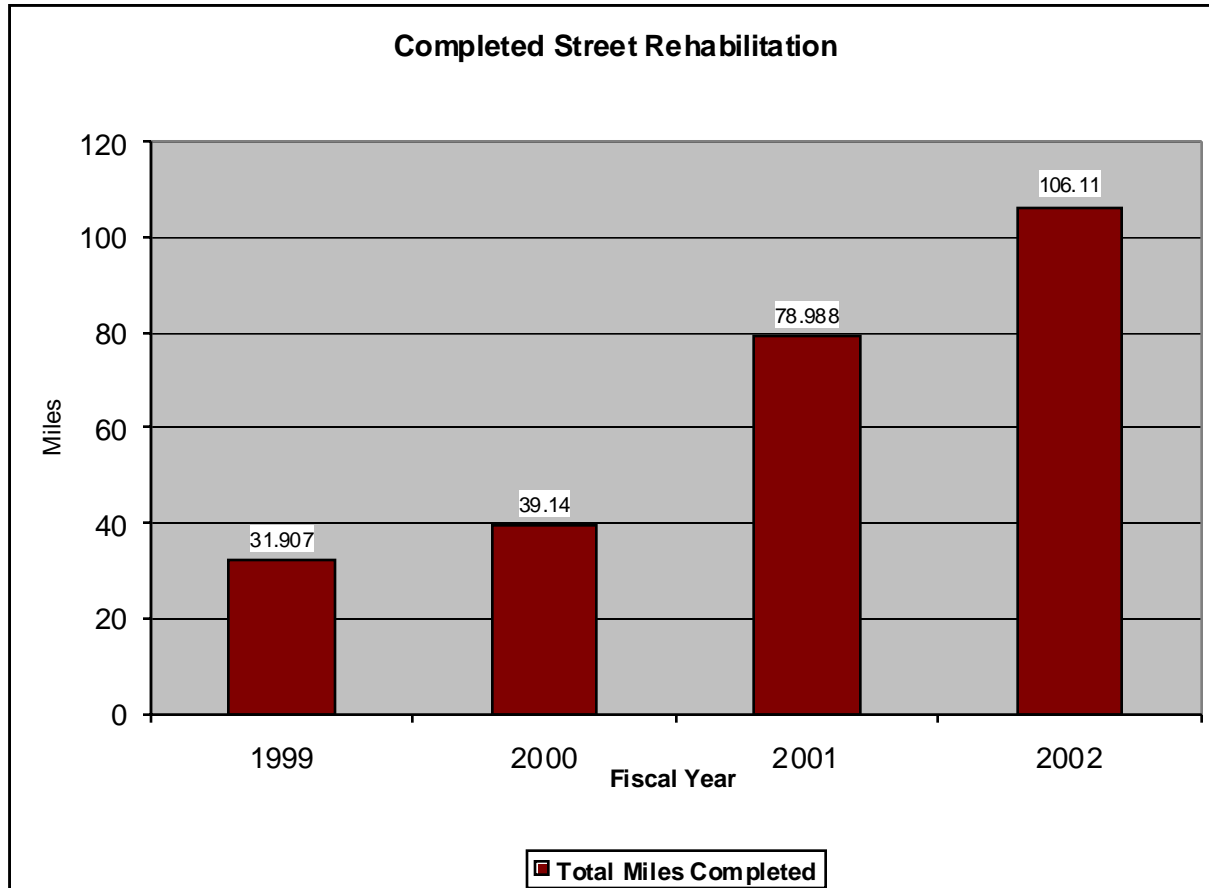
Since we met last year, we have completed the reconstruction of the Rhode Island & T St Bridges over North Capitol Street, the 23rd St Bridges over E St

Expressway and Virginia Avenue and the rebuilding of the Southeast Freeway, from 2nd Street to 11th Street, SE. And this summer we expect to finish the reconstruction of the Benning Road Bridge over the Anacostia River, as well as four small bridges over Oxon Run in Ward 8. We continue to make major progress on the reconstruction of the Anacostia Freeway (Chesapeake to the DC line) and we are reaching the half-way point for the Georgetown project.

At last year's oversight hearing, I shared some background on our new project management approach to improve how we supervise our projects. Under this approach, a team is responsible for managing a project from initial conception to completion, including community involvement, planning, project development, design, procurement, and construction supervision. This new structure has fostered accountability, ownership and a focus on improving the entire system rather than simply doing projects.

The result of this new model has been an enhanced ability to move projects forward through planning, design and eventually construction. Continued high levels of expenditure are evidence this fact. In FY 2002, DDOT spent nearly \$230 million – up from \$125 million in FY 1999. This level reflects spending of 90% of our planned expenditures – a level that are necessary to spend down the more than half billion dollars in accrued projects that DDOT had built up over the past ten years. Thus far this year, DDOT has spent \$55 million, on our way to annual spending of \$275 million. Due to the delay in our budget approval, we have had a slow start but plan to

make up for this delay. DDOT is also just entering the construction season and the period during which we expend the majority of our resources.



The project management approach is allowing DDOT to successfully undertake major upcoming projects that could be very disruptive if not properly planned, coordinated with the community and administered. These include the reconstruction of the 16th Street, NW, from Primrose Street to the Maryland line, the road work associated with the Washington Convention Center at Mt. Vernon Square, the project at Barracks Row – 8th /9th Streets SE - and the upcoming reconstruction of the P Street Bridge over Rock Creek.

In FY 2002, DDOT began investing substantial time and effort in the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) in partnership with the Office of Planning. First, we were able to attract an AWI Implementation Manager to begin rescoping a number previously proposed projects to bring them in line with the vision and objectives of the AWI. In addition, with the support of Congressmen Steny Hoyer and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, we were able to secure funds to undertake the South Capital Street Corridor Study.

This project allows the District to lay the planning foundation to realize a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to develop an Anacostia River crossing and ceremonial entrance to the Capitol that also reconnects the nearby neighborhoods to the river.

Another bridge project of particular interest to you, Councilmember Schwartz, is the reconstruction of the 9th Street Bridge, NE, over the railroad tracks. As you know, the original plan was to rebuild the bridge on its present location, which would have meant closing this span for 30 months. This would have been both disruptive for 20,000 weekday motorists who currently use the bridge and those using it to access the new Brentwood Road shopping center. Based on your comments and those from Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5B, DDOT is planning to build a new parallel span, allowing the present bridge to be closed with minimal disruption. DDOT is close to completing the preliminary scope for the project and design work.

Bridge Decay

Bridges are vital parts of the transportation system, affecting the public safety of District residents and suburban commuters, regional access and mobility, infrastructure stewardship and homeland security. In addition to the 9th Street Bridge, NE, many of our bridges date back to the 1960's and have reached the point of requiring major rehabilitation or replacement.

Bringing our bridges to as state of good repair is DDOT's highest capital improvement priority. Currently DDOT estimates is that it will cost upwards of \$300 million over the next six years to meet the needs of our most critical bridges. However, this is not a static figure. If left unmet, these costs will rise exponentially because decay accelerates as the protective features of these bridges fail. So instead of less expensive repair, total replacement becomes necessary long before the end of the normal bridge life-span.

In other words, if the potential funding crisis is not solved, the current crisis is small compared to what the District will face in a few years if nothing is done. DDOT is in the final stages of preparing a full report on the condition of our bridges. Entitled "The Bridge Crisis in the District of Columbia," DDOT is planning to distribute it as part of our effort to secure these needed funds.

DDOT looks forward to working with you, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton and Bush Administration and other federal officials to identify the funds necessary for these critical, costly projects.

Infrastructure and Right-of-Way Maintenance



9 Street Bridge, NE,
over Railroad Tracks and New York Avenue showing
advanced state of deterioration and temporary supports.

Stewardship of the District's infrastructure and public right-of-way is at the core of our mission and vision. And DDOT continues to build off the successes of the last two years by keeping our roads and highways in good repair. With the help of Congress and the Council, DDOT repaved more than 2000 blocks of local streets in fiscal year 2002. This is on top of the almost 700 blocks paved in FY 2001. This multi-year neighborhood-repaving program yields several benefits,

including smoother rides, longer life for our roadways and fewer potholes.

As expected after the recent snows and cold weather, we have seen an increase in the number of reported potholes to Mayor's Citywide Call Center. This reflects both an increased acceptance of the 727-1000 facility and increased use by DDOT's

Neighborhood Infrastructure Maintenance Officers (NIMOs) to log their observed defects in the infrastructure. Despite the increase in calls and actual potholes, we are improving our response to these roadway irritations.

After the President's day storm and the smaller one last week, our pothole crews are being tested. Going into February, we were filling over 96% of potholes called into 727-1000 within 72 hours. Yesterday, we had over 300 pothole service requests. Not only are we working hard to fill those reported but we are working fill potholes before they are called in. We have been fielding 12 pothole crews, including four that are using our new unitized pothole trucks. As reported in the Washington Post, these new trucks make permanent repairs using 3 people instead of five and using the one truck instead of two. In addition to responding to the service requests we are running our major arterial streets to get the potholes before people notice them.

Using funds from the Council-developed Local Road Maintenance Trust Fund, DDOT purchased four Pro-Patch road maintenance machines. These machines make possible better, longer-lasting patches with fewer personnel under safer work zone conditions. The trucks carry heated asphalt and all the necessary tools to perform permanent pothole repairs.

The Local Road Maintenance Trust Fund, fueled by collections of the rights-of-way rental fee, has also provided for increased preventive maintenance. DDOT now has two new crack sealing machines. They will be used starting this spring

on our local streets to prevent potholes from forming in freezing weather.

Last year, FY 2002, the District collected nearly \$37 million in rights-of-way (ROW) rental fees for the Local Road Maintenance Trust Fund; about \$15 million has been collected so far in FY 2003.

Safety is a key organization-wide goal of DDOT. For street maintenance personnel, safety-related equipment purchases include: protective uniforms, high visibility vests, truck mounted arrow boards, roll up signs, safety cones and flagging paddles. In addition, all maintenance employees are taking a course in work zone traffic control and safety and customer service at the University of Maryland.

DDOT has added five new weather stations that allow us to get up to the minute information on wind speed, accumulation and pavement temperature. This data allows DDOT and DPW to make informed decisions about when to mobilize for snow events, and what level of mobilization is necessary. This information has saved the District tens of thousands of dollars in costs associated with calling crews in season and keeping schools open and government operating when others have had to cancel events.

Snow

Speaking of snow, for the first time in two years, the District is having a winter snow season. And this is not just a “normal” snow season--this has been the third

snowiest winter on record. The major snow event was the Presidents' Day storm of February 16-17. It started with the Sunday-Monday snowfall, the fifth biggest in DC history with a total accumulation of 16.7 inches at Reagan National Airport, none at other higher elevation in the city.

Our full mobilization was slightly delayed by a forecast that predicted that the storm would hit later than it did. However, when it became clear early Sunday morning that this major storm with an expected very heavy snowfall, the Departments of Transportation and Public Works went into full, continuous mobilization.

In a virtually seamless cooperative endeavor, the two departments fielded upwards of 200 pieces of equipment at the height of the storm and maintained continuous-12-hour shifts for seven tours of duty.

The two Departments used the experience from the previous snow events this season and the directions in the District's snow plan to meet the challenge of the Presidents' Day storm. Regarding residential streets, the plan commits the District to have at least one lane made passable within 60 hours of the end of a storm of 18 inches or more which ended at midnight Wednesday. Our quality assurance personnel estimated that all but 15 to 20 percent of the residential streets were passable at that time.

However, these results did not accurately reflect what residents expect of the

District Government, particularly residents who live on what we term ‘problem residential streets’ i.e., narrow, hilly, curvy streets and cul-de-sacs. In addition, I must report that in some cases some of our drivers were not familiar with all the streets on their routes.

Since the President’s Day storm, we assessed our performance and plotted areas that had been missed on our snow routes map. Taking advantage of the lesser intensity of the Wednesday-Thursday storm of last week, we applied these lessons to concentrate more time, energy and staff effort on the residential streets where our redoubled efforts were both visible and effective.

We will continue to work on improving our snow removal practices. This includes training for plow drivers to avoid pushing snow banks in front of bus stops and intersections and to make sure that they know all the streets on their routes.

DDOT and DPW are also proud of the techniques developed during the cleanup of the Presidents’ Day storm to remove plowed snow from the downtown area where it was greatly impeding pedestrian and vehicle traffic and parking. In midweek we mustered our loaders and trucks to carry snow away, principally to a site off the eastern end of the South Capitol/Frederick Douglass Bridge. And by the Friday, though the cooperation of the various city agencies, we purchased and put into operation a rebuilt snow melting machine that continued in use through last weekend.

All of these efforts have cost money and we are making every effort to account for all costs. The original snow budget was \$3.2 million, but so far this year we have spent more than \$6 million. We are working with the Chief Financial Officer to identify funds to cover these costs.

Mass Transit

As the Washington Metropolitan Region has recently been classified as “severe” in terms of air quality conformity, DDOT has been working with the surrounding jurisdictions to address this issue. Mass transit will play an important role by balancing the transportation alternatives in the District of Columbia. There have been several major innovations in the District’s mass transit operations and relationship with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

This is particularly important for the District because we have 55% of WMATA’s total weekday regional bus ridership and 41% of total regional weekday transit ridership. It is important to note that three-fifths of DC residents who use transit, ride the bus. DC is the primary regional contributor to clean air improvements having 11% of the regional population and only 7% of emissions while accommodating 21% of the region's employment. With this proportion of the regional population we pay 33% of the Metro rail subsidy and 45 % of the bus subsidy. These numbers show the disproportionate burden on the District for regional clean air compliance.

To improve air quality in the region, DDOT and WMATA are working together to replace diesel-fueled buses with vehicles using compressed natural gas (CNG).

CNG powered buses emit less particulates and smog-causing nitrogen oxides and are somewhat quieter than their diesel counterparts.

Long-term expansion of the transit system will be necessary for the region to accommodate projected growth. DDOT and the Office of Planning have collaborated with WMATA in a DC Transit Development Study that examined the potential for new rail transit routes in the District over the next 25 years. The summary study, which received widespread favorable publicity, identified nine corridors for possible transit expansion including bus, bus rapid transit, light rail and Metrorail. The public participation process narrowed this list of nine to four of the most promising light rail routes for proposed EIS and Preliminary Engineering.

In addition, the study identified a "Starter Line" that has elements common to each of the four most promising corridors, and which would be a candidate for early implementation in the development of light rail transit in DC. The Starter Line would connect the Metrorail stations at Minnesota Ave, Anacostia, Navy Yard and Southwest Waterfront along the Anacostia Waterfront. Future expansion of service into the rest of the four most promising transit corridors would be possible from the Starter Line.

While the specific alignments and route alternatives have not yet been determined, these routes will be advanced for consideration for inclusion in the Federal Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill.

Trees

The tree program is one of DDOT's most visible activities for all citizens and all neighborhoods and continues to show progress on several fronts. Perhaps the most significant achievement was the completion of the District's street tree inventory.

Last summer, in cooperation with the Casey Tree Foundation and taking advantage of a \$90,000 grant from the US Forest Service, every corner of the city was canvassed to compile information on street trees. The resulting data will be housed in a new tree management database that is currently under development. It will provide vital statistics on the District's tree resources including public access to the data via Internet. When completed this will be one of the most comprehensive and sophisticated urban tree inventories in the Nation.

DDOT looks forward to working with the Committee to implement the new tree bill, including writing the implementing regulations.

We also made a major financial commitment to the tree program in FY 2002. DDOT spent more than \$6 million on tree maintenance and improvement--\$1.2 million for planting; nearly \$3 million for trimming; and \$2.0 million for removal. Our intention was to focus our resources on removal and trimming as we attempt to first take care of the trees that we have. This number increases to \$7 million in FY03.

DDOT's relationship with the \$50 million Casey Endowment Fund, working through Casey Trees, is stronger than ever. This includes the just-mentioned inventory and a memorial planting for 9/11 victims. We are also working closely with our other public/private partners such as the Green Spaces for DC, the Urban Forest Council and the US Forest Service. This is vital because in addition to money, the ultimate success or failure of our greening efforts will depend upon the involvement and participation of our community.

Traffic and Safety

DDOT continues to make major strides in improving traffic safety and modernizing the District's traffic management system.

DDOT has completed the upgrade of all signs at more than 300 schools in the District, including 4,800 stop signs, 1,800 parking signs, 5,600 school crossing signs and pavement markings around the schools. The program included all institutions--public, charter and private.

At the ward level, DDOT continues to use the model established by the Ward 3 Transportation Advisory Group. These advisory groups provide a forum for citizens to bring requests for short- and long-term measures to the attention of DDOT staff and their ward neighbors. Concerns have centered on improving traffic signs, installing calming measures, increasing pedestrian safety, reducing vehicle speed and managing truck traffic. DDOT is about to give a "notice to

proceed” for a contract for new traffic signals that have been on neighborhood wish-list for some time.

DDOT has completed implementation of its traffic calming program around District public schools. New signage, rumble strips and other traffic calming features have been installed to reduce speeding. The Department has implemented several traffic calming demonstration projects throughout the city, including a “smart” crosswalk on Porter Street NW designed to slow traffic at that location.

In addition, the Department has published a Traffic Calming Policy Guide, which is available on the DDOT Website. Copies are also being distributed through the ANC’s and community meetings. The Policy Guide briefly describes basic traffic calming features and spells out the procedures community groups should use to request and coordinate traffic calming requests.

In March, the Department will initiate a series of 20 traffic-calming studies city-wide, based upon SNAP plan requests and petitions received from citizen groups. And later this spring, DDOT will initiate in-house traffic calming teams which will include representatives to investigate traffic calming requests, city-wide.

All of these actions have had some measurable effect. There was a more than 30% reduction in pedestrian fatalities from 2000 to 2001. While it is hard to pinpoint what is the most important factor in this reduction, the combination of improvements

around schools, installation of yellow pylons at pedestrian crossings and increased MPD enforcement is evidently having a positive effect. I have included an article from American Public Works Association (APWA) Magazine that highlights the effectiveness of the pedestrian warning pylons based on research done at a mid-western university.

DDOT is also hard at work on the District's advanced traffic management system. Once in operation, this system will increase the capacity of our roads, reduce response time to accidents and emergencies and improve snow operations.

The Traffic Management Center, in the second floor of the Reeves Center, is staffed round-the-clock, allowing trained technicians to continuously monitor all aspects of the system and make adjustments quickly. DDOT's nine stationary traffic monitor cameras are a key tool in the Traffic Center. These cameras provide real-time views of conditions at various locations. The center is becoming increasingly attractive to the local media. Channel 7 recently broadcast its morning traffic reports live from the Center. And during the recent snow storms, these cameras were fed to the Snow Room to help coordinate snow removal.

DDOT's traffic management software was recently enhanced to allow integrated control of the District's 1,600 traffic signals and additional traffic management cameras.

DDOT was given approval just last week for a contract to install 100 additional

cameras at critical traffic points throughout the city. Financed with federal homeland defense funds, these cameras will be part of the next generation of traffic management systems that will provide continuous adjustments of signals as traffic conditions change and up-to-the-minute information for drivers. The cameras will also help improve response-time to traffic incidents, malfunctioning traffic signals, street lights and traffic controllers and with the management of Event Routes.

Using funds made available in the FY 2002 Defense Appropriations Bill, DDOT is also upgrading the traffic signal control cabinets at every controlled intersection to improve security, reliability and ease of use and reduce maintenance.

DDOT also led a regional effort that resulted in the installation of “event route” signs to guide motorists into and out of the District that will have both emergency and everyday use. In cooperation with regional partners, dual-purpose metal signs will direct drivers: a) out to the I-495/Capital Beltway and, b) in toward Washington’s major monuments downtown. Besides providing route guidance during emergencies, the signs will help visitors and new residents find their way into DC’s major tourist destinations and out back to major thoroughfares.

Planning

Planning transportation improvements is a key function of DDOT. Working closely with the Office of Planning, DDOT has a number of studies involving the full range of transportation issues. These include:

- The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative is examining land use and transportation recommendations for the large number of transportation improvement projects under study, including connections to the Anacostia River and across the Anacostia River for the area bounded by New York Avenue/Rte 50 to the North and South Capitol Street to the south.
- The Barney Circle Reevaluation/Anacostia Crossings Study, to be merged with the waterfront study (above), and the South Capitol Street Study (below), will investigate alternatives for connecting the Anacostia Freeway to the SE/SW Freeway and improve resident access to the Anacostia waterfront.
- The South Capitol Street Bridge Alternatives Study will look at transportation needs along the South Capitol Street gateway and bridge to improve access and land-use in the Buzzards Point and SE Federal Center areas. The scope for this federally-funded study is to be completed shortly in coordination with the Office of Planning and the National Capital Planning Commission.
- The New York Avenue/ITC Study will look at opportunities to improve the accessibility and functionality of the New York Avenue Corridor this year.

Other DDOT studies to be completed in the next few months are: the 4th Street SW/Waterside Mall Transportation Study, the Takoma Transportation Study and the Connecticut Avenue Transportation Study. The following studies will start shortly: the Pennsylvania Avenue SE Transportation Study (east of the Anacostia), the Friendship Heights Transportation Study, the Military Road/Missouri Ave.

Transportation Study, the Columbia Heights/Mt. Pleasant Transportation Study, and the Motor Carrier Safety Study.

DDOT is working with the community on a number of streetscape improvements, including: 8th Street SE/Barracks Row, 7th Street SE/Eastern Market, P Street NW/Dupont Circle, H Street NE, Anacostia Gateway and Brookland.

DDOT has completed hiring eight transportation planners—one for each ward. These planners have been invaluable and knowledgeable ward-based liaisons between civic and neighborhood groups and DDOT activities. They will work closely with the community on a number of traffic calming studies that will begin this spring.

Bicycle Program

The District's bicycle program is making great strides after decades of stagnation.

Our new bicycle coordinator started with DDOT in April 2001 and he has been hard at work on many initiatives. We have installed 80 bike racks since January, 2001, begun the update of the 25-year-old bike plan, given away more than 200 bicycle helmets since last summer and added several miles of new bike lanes as part of our regular resurfacing activities, including Massachusetts Avenue, NE, from 6th to 11th Street, and 14th Street, NW, from Shepherd to Kennedy Streets. Most recently, bike racks are now featured on the front of most Metrobuses.

Work on the Metropolitan Branch Trail, a dedicated bicycle trail running from Union Station to Silver Spring, is proceeding. The stretch at 1st, NE, in back of

Union Station is almost finished and we have just transferred \$6 million to WMATA to include the Trail as part of the New York Avenue Metro station being built at Florida Avenue, NE.

Civil Rights Activities

As we contract to rebuild and maintain our transportation infrastructure we are mindful of our continuing obligation to ensure that the contractors that we do business with comply with Federal and local laws in the areas of civil rights. This year we started to rebuild our internal capacity to monitor contractor efforts. A Civil Rights Office was created to enforce equal employment opportunities both for external contracting compliance and within DDOT.

This new office has: hired a Civil Rights Manager and selected an EEO Consultant, the US Department of Transportation Volpe Center, to develop a model program in cooperation with the D.C. Office of Human Rights, the D.C. Office of Personnel and the Federal Highway Administration; selected a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Consultant (Milligan & Associates) to develop contracting opportunities for our minority and disadvantaged business community; and started the Progressive Partners' Program to assist and train women, minorities, TANF recipients and the unemployed for careers in highway construction.

Facilities and Equipment

Our workforce deserves to be shown the highest level of respect and dignity when they are in the work environment. To this end, DDOT has made major

investments in better equipment, such as the new integrated street maintenance trucks and continued new investment in enhanced facilities to house our staff. This includes the construction of a state-of-the-art street maintenance facility and a new materials testing laboratory at 410 Farragut Street, NW. And just past weekend some of our project management personnel moved to refurbished facilities at NY Ave and Florida Avenues, NE. We invite all councilmembers to visit these facilities.

Training

DDOT has made major progress to integrate training and education into its day-to-day activities. In FY 2002, we spent 500 percent more on training and capacity building than in FY 2001. This year we have already spent nearly 200 percent more than for the same period last year or \$207,000 to date – compared with just \$35,000 in all of FY 1999. Reinvesting in and professionalizing our workforce through improved training is key to our future success. We have eleven engineers studying to get their professional engineer (P.E.) certification, two Capital City Fellows are on an engineering career track and DDOT is proud that 12 of the most recent graduates from the Center of Excellence in Municipal Management at George Washington University were from DDOT.

This is only a summary of our activities both current and those undertaken over the last year. As you can see, DDOT has made substantial progress in rebuilding the capacity to maintain and enhance the District's transportation infrastructure.

I will be more than happy to answer any questions you or your colleagues may have at this time.